

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 056798

FOL SENT ACTION SECSTATE WASHDC INFO BANGKOK LONDON RANGOON
VIENTIANE MARCH 23, 1973 FROM HONG KONG REPEATED TO YOU QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 2833

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR HK UK XC

SUBJECT: NARCOTICS COMMISSIONER ROLPH' S SEASIA VISIT

REF: A) HK 2797

B) HK 1768 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: HONG KONG NARCOTICS COMMISSIONER NORMAN ROLPH MET WITH
CONGEN OFFICERS MARCH 21 TO DISCUSS HIS RECENT VISIT TO
BANGKOK, VIENTIANE, AND RANGOON. HE EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE
APPRECIATION FOR ASSISTANCE AND INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THREE
AMERICAN EMBASSIES INVOLVED. ROLPH CURRENTLY PREPARING REPORT,
WHICH HOPEFULLY WILL BE SUBMITTED TO LONDON IN ABOUT THREE WEEKS.
APPARENTLY, HIS RECOMMENDATIONS WILL INCLUDE: ASSIGNMENT OF HKG
NARCOTICS OFFICIAL TO BRITISH EMBASSY, BANGKOK; PROPOSAL FOR
BILATERAL US- UK (WITH HKG MEMBERSHIP) STUDY OF SEASIAN NAR-
COTICS PROBLEM, INCLUDING PREEMPTIVE BUYING OF OPIUM.
END SUMMARY.
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1. ROLPH OPENED CONVERSATION WITH HIGHLY COMPLIMENTARY STATEMENT OF APPRECIATION FOR ARRANGEMENTS AND BRIEFINGS BY EMBASSIES VIENTIANE, RANGOON, AND BANGKOK. HE WAS IMPRESSED BOTH BY THE INTEREST TAKEN BY TOP- LEVEL EMBASSY OFFICIALS AS WELL AS QUALITY OF MEN IN THE FIELD. HE ASKED PARTICULARLY THAT HIS APPRECIATION BE EXPRESSED TO ALL THREE EMBASSIES FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE.

2. ROLPH IS CURRENTLY PREPARING REPORT ON TRIP ALONG WITH VARIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS. HE HOPES TO COMPLETE THE REPORT, OBTAIN THE GOVERNOR' S APPROVAL FOR SUBMISSION TO LONDON, AND HAVE REPORT IN LONDON IN ABOUT THREE WEEKS. WHILE NOT STATING PRECISELY WHAT HIS RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE, WE ASSUME FROM CONVERSATION THAT ONE DEFINITELY INCLUDED WILL BE ASSIGNMENT OF HKG NARCOTICS OFFICIAL IN BRITISH EMBASSY, BANGKOK. ROLPH INDICATED THAT HIS VISIT HAD HELPED FOCUS SOME ATTENTION BY BRITISH EMBASSIES ON THE PROBLEM BUT HE APPARENTLY BELIEVES THAT BRITISH ARE NOT DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO DISCOURAGE NARCOTICS GROWING AND TRAFFICKING IN SEA.

3. ANOTHER POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION IS INVITATION TO THAI, BURMESE, AND LAOTIAN NARCOTICS OFFICIALS TO VISIT HONG KONG. ROLPH SEES THESE PRIMARILY AS GOODWILL- TYPE VISITS WITH FEW VISIBLE IMMEDIATE PAYOFFS. HE PERSONALLY DOES NOT BELIEVE BURMESE WILL COME AND HAS DIFFICULTIES WITH THAI INVITATION SINCE HE CLAIMS THAIS ALWAYS PROVIDE FIRST- CLASS TICKETS, ALL AMENITIES IN THAILAND, AND FIRST- CLASS SHOW FOR VISITORS, SOMETHING WHICH HKG WILL NOT DO.

4. THIRD POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION, AND ONE WE BELIEVE MOST IMPORTANT, WOULD BE FOR BILATERAL US- UK GROUP TO STUDY SEA NARCOTICS SITUATION IN DEPTH, DETERMINE PRECISE MUTUAL GOALS, AND TAKE A HARD, COLD PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL LOOK AT WHAT CAN BE DONE TO MEET THOSE GOALS. JOINT STUDY WOULD INCLUDE CONSIDERATION OF PREEMPTIVE PURCHASE OF OPIUM. ROLPH ENVISAGES HKG REPRESENTATION ON UK DELEGATION.

5. ROLPH' S PERSONAL PREFERENCE REMAINS FOR MIXED LAW ENFORCEMENT, CROP SUBSTITUTION, AND PREEMPTIVE BUYING PROGRAMS. HE CONSIDERS LAW ENFORCEMENT CAPABLE OF CONTROLLING ONLY TEN PERCENT OF CURRENT DRUG EXPORTS FROM GOLDEN TRIANGLE. CROP SUBSTITUTION
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HE SEES PRIMARILY AS A LONG- TERM PROSPECT. THUS, HE FAVORS CON-

SIDERATION OF PREEMPTIVE BUYING. HE ESTIMATES THAT OPIUM PURCHASE WOULD HAVE IMMEDIATE EFFECT ON FLOW OF NARCOTICS TO HONG KONG AND US AND BELIEVES PURCHASE WOULD BE A RELATIVELY INEXPENSIVE, TEMPORARY COMMITMENT OF FUNDS LEADING TO EVENTUAL CROP SUBSTITUTION PROGRAM. MODALITIES OF METHOD OF PURCHASE, TRANSPORTING, DESTROYING, DISCOURAGING INCREASED PRODUCTION, ENGAGING IN COMPETITIVE BUYING WITH NORMAL NARCOTICS PURCHASERS ALL COULD BE TOPICS FOR BILATERAL STUDY GROUP, IF IT OPTS TO TAKE THIS ROAD.

6. ROLPH OBVIOUSLY SEEKING SOME SOLUTION FOR HONG KONG' S PROBLEM WHICH HE CLAIMS CANNOT BE HANDLED MERELY BY LAW ENFORCEMENT IN HONG KONG WITHOUT ATTACKING SOURCE OF SUPPLY. HE EQUATES US PROBLEM WITH HONG KONG' S, I. E., HOW TO STOP AT SOURCE. HIS COMMENTS ON VALUE OF PREEMPTIVE PURCHASES, WE BELIEVE, SHOULD BE CONSIDERED, ESPECIALLY WITHIN CONTEXT OF PROPOSED US- UK BILATERAL STUDY GROUP, IF SUCH GROUP APPROVED. WE ARE CURRENTLY CONSIDERING THIS TYPE OF PROPOSAL AND HOPE TO BE ABLE TO PRODUCE COMPANION RECOMMENDATION BY TIME ROLPH' S PROPOSALS ARE ON WAY TO LONDON. OSBORN UNQUOTE ROGERS

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